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INSIDE TODAY

U.S. NEWS

N.J. Shooting



Jersey City Police Director Samuel Jefferson talks about two city police officers, Marc DiNardo and Michael Camacho, outside the Jersey City Medical Center in Jersey City, N.J., Friday, July 17, 2009, where the officers, who were shot Thursday in a shoot out, remain in critical condition. (AP Photo/Mike Derer)

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WORLD NEWS

POPE BREAKS WRIST



Pope Benedict XVI waves as he leaves the Regional Hospital in Aosta, Italy, Friday, July 17, 2009, after surgery on his right wrist. The pope broke his right wrist during a late-night fall in his Alpine vacation chalet and will have to have his arm in a cast for a month while recovering from surgery, doctors said Friday.

(AP Photo/Luca Bruno)

Page B8

ECO DMS hosts a spectacular Grand Opening in Curacao

Willemstad – ECO DMS, a successful Aruba-based destination management services company, just recently opened a second branch on the island of Curacao.

Having thrived for 21 years in Aruba, the company made a decision to also spread its wings to Curacao in view of the island's significant growth in tourism and in anticipation of increased future group business, as forecasted with the upcoming opening of the Hyatt Regency and the recent inauguration of the Renaissance Resort Curacao. Wichita Villacres, President and CEO of ECO DMS, with affiliations to PRA Destination Management of South East Florida, hosted an elegant cocktail party at Hotel Kura Hulanda, Willemstad, Curacao, declaring that her company is now positioned to market the Dutch Caribbean,



Aruba & Curacao, two similar yet different tropical destinations.

The party at Jaipur restaurant, overlooking the eco pool was graced by the presence of many movers and shakers.

Continued on Pages B8 & 9



A New CEI in Curacao



Rif Fort Willemstad – A beautiful new Colombian Emeralds International was just opened at the historical world heritage Rif Fort built in 1828 and developed in



meanwhile attracting island visitors and locals.

People have come to equate Colombian Emeralds International with celebration, says director Dalilah Mansur. At CEI, clients don't just make purchases, they enjoy a memorable experience.

Whether a customer is celebrating a birthday, wedding, honeymoon, anniversary, or graduation with the purchase of a beautiful piece of jewelry, the CEI staff ensures that the occasion is honored. This warm experience resonates with guests, making their shopping experience truly unforgettable.

CEI prides itself on superior customer service, both during and after sales. All members of the CEI team are well-trained in the company's core values and are encouraged by CEI to continue their studies in the jewelry retail field.

The beautiful flag-ship store in the Renaissance Curacao Resort & Casino is bursting



with gorgeous colored gems, diamonds, gold and white gold jewelry.

The Amoro line, the world's most romantic jewelry collection is on display with other delightful lines such as Sugar & Spice; East meets West; Stardust and more, distinctive fine jewelry

guaranteed to give joy today and the pleasure of fine quality forever. With more than forty years experience and with more than sixty store locations throughout the Caribbean, CEI Curacao is more than just a shop, it is an attraction, a great representative of the island's thriving tourist product. □



Fishes & More invites you to a special Earlybird Menu

Fishes & More specialize in fresh fish and seafood, and at the same time please the non-fish lovers as well. All the dishes are prepared a la minute by an internationally experienced kitchen team, which gives the twist to our dishes. Influences from all over the world are found back on the menu and they are already well known for our daily changing specials. If you have a large party, or if there is anything you feel like in particular, Fishes & More can always arrange



to have your dinner cooked just for you, as they work only with fresh and honest products! Ideally located in front of the Occidental Resort

(Former Allegro), they are visited both by individuals and families alike, as we have a kids playground and a kids menu to entertain them, so they can enjoy

their dinner as much as you will yours!

We have entertainment every night at 8PM, and even after dinner the perfect night out continues, as you can shop till you drop since the shops on our friendly square are open until eleven.

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Early bird menu is priced at \$ 21.75

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USA Press Group Enjoys Aruba as A Family Friendly Destination

Aruba Marriott Hosts 3rd Press Group for This Year in Playground Spirits



PALM BEACH – Currently the Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino is hosting a press group from the United States, along with PR Agency Diamond Public Relations, based in Miami. The media visit is concentrated around family fun as Marriott is Aruba's playground for all generations and the island is a perfect fit for any type of family vacations. All journalists, writing for family forums on the internet as well as printed family publications, were able to bring one family member to get the genuine experience. Along with children and cousins they are currently enjoying all the island has to offer for the young and the young at heart.

For their welcome dinner the group enjoyed a family

style casual dining experience at the Dutch Pancake House, located in Renaissance's Seaport Mall. A traditional sweet dish called 'poffertjes' received raving reviews, as did the richly filled Dutch pancakes and Aruba's own Balashi beers that were served in style.

On Friday morning the press group teamed up for a fun filled program at De Palm Island, including the waterslides, seatrek and snuba. In the afternoon all press members got to try a first class in beach tennis, provided by Aruba's beach tennis pro's at the official beach tennis courts at Moomba Beach, followed by refreshing sunset cocktails. The day ended with a dance party for the generation that grew up in the 80-ies

and listened to the tunes of Michael Jackson, during the 'back to the 80-ies' party in Marriott's Grand Ballroom.

On Saturday the USA media will conclude their Aruba visit with a Jeep Safari provided by De Palm Tours, exploring a variety of activities and Aruba's landscape, making stops at the Ostrich Farm and the caves on the north coast. The farewell dinner will be held at Marriott's sunset restaurant Simply Fish, located right on the beach in front of the hotel. While the adults on this trip are enjoying their freshly caught seafood, the kids participating in this media visit will be able to create their own pizzas at Marriott's La Vista Restaurant, followed by a movie and tie dye activities

in the resort's Bon Bini Kids Club.

Designated among the "World's Best Places to Stay" by Conde Nast Traveler's 2006 Gold List, Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino boasts 411 fully renovated guestrooms – the most spacious on the island – each with large, private balconies overlooking the sparkling waters of the Caribbean Sea. On property, seven restaurants and cafes provide fare from light to elegant, while the

largest casino in Aruba, a 6,500 square-foot spa, free-form swimming pool with cascading waterfalls and high-energy health club offer entertaining diversions. To obtain more information call the Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino at 888-PARADISE or visit www.arubamarriott.com.

In the pictures: USA media members enjoying a casual dinner at the Dutch Pancake House on Thursday night, July 16. □



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AAA seeking comments through consultations with users

Upgrading the quality of the traffic situation in front of the terminal

No question of unilateral imposition of rules in this stage



ORANJESTAD- Aruba Airport Authority N.V. (AAA) has announced plans for the upgrading of the traffic situation in front of the Aeropuerto Internacional Reina Beatrix. Approximately 2 years ago AAA consulted several taxi associations and bus operators and discussed different options to see which situation would best suit both parties. The option

to close the first lane in front of the terminal building for certain traffic was discussed and also the introduction of paying a modest fee for the use of this first lane by taxi's and busses. At present a variety of undesirable situations unfold themselves right in front of the terminal building, creating a poor first and last impressions for our visitors. Just to mention

a few: taxi's and other vehicles parked in front of the airport terminal building without a driver in it creating safety and security hazards, traffic jams because there is not enough space for all the vehicles that want to make use of the first traffic lane, problems with certain taxi drivers that do not adhere to the "first come first go". On peak days the situation is chaotic and is considered to be a safety and security hazard. The service level is also seriously affected and as a consequence users, amongst others being passengers, visitors, and taxi drivers themselves are not happy with the level of service offered in front of the airport and have voiced their discontent. AAA therefore decided that something had to be done to improve the traffic flow

in front of the airport and the level of service offered to passengers. The new traffic layout that AAA will introduce will lead to a situation where a reduced number of vehicles will be permitted on the first lane in front of the airport. Only taxi's and busses who haven't obtained a permission granted by AAA and comply with certain prerequisites will be allowed in this first lane. This will benefit the service level offered, the taxi drivers, the traffic flow and at the same time also the safety in front of the airport. AAA wants to stress that in no way whatsoever, access to the airport will be limited; the secondary lane will remain open for the public including taxi's, etc. It also needs to be emphasized that in the new

situation several facilities will be made available to taxi drivers, including a waiting lounge with restrooms, vending machines and screens with digital flight information and a computerized system, assuring the "first come first go" principle. AAA has elaborated well thought-out plans to achieve this change to the benefit of all concerned. Recently, AAA has invited parties for consultations on the proposed concept, to be held in the last week of July. AAA would like to stress that it is open to suggestions, and that by no means the invitation should be seen as imposing unilateral measures on users. Recent reactions by certain taxi drivers in the press are highly premature and regrettable. □



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Kids Camp at Tierra del Sol keep participants active and happy



Tierra Del Sol – A typical day in the life of a camper at Tierra del Sol Kids' Camp begins with Tennis from 10 to 12 noon, Lunch from 12 to 1 pm, Golf from 1 to 3 pm, and best of all, Pool Activities from 3 to 4 pm. By the time participants reach their homes in the late afternoon they are Happy & Exhausted Campers! Tierra del Sol offers five separate camp cycles, says Oliver Riding, Head Golf Professional. One of which

just concluded, while others are still available. Tierra del Sol welcomes kids age 6 to 14 at \$195 per child, per week. The next dates available for inscription are: July 20th , 27th , August 3rd, and 10th. This summer keep your children active and challenged with the Kids' Camp at Tierra del Sol, improving their game of tennis and golf, and picking up many other helpful lessons in life, such as: play fair, play passionately, apply yourself,

practice makes perfect, and make friends while you have fun. □



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Loyal visitors honored at Costa Linda Resort



PALM BEACH - Recently at Costa Linda Resort vacationers were presented with honorary titles created by the Ministry of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guest visiting Aruba for ten and 20 consecutive years. Special friends of Aruba, enjoying ten or more annual vacations here, are given

the Distinguished Guest certificate and those with twenty consecutive years are awarded the Ambassador of goodwill title. The recent honoring were effected by the Aruba Tourism Authority associate Ricardo Croes at Costa Linda Resort they call their home away from home. The following



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guests were honored as distinguished visitors after visiting Aruba for 10 years : Ronald & Linda Solimini, Raul & Linnea Garcia, Elizabeth Garcia & also Andrew Garcia.

Pictured: Mr. Ricardo Croes together with all honorees at Costa Linda Resort. □

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PALM BEACH – The health and calorie conscious among us need fear steakhouses no more. Whether it's a low-carb, low-fat, or even vegetarian diet you follow, Texas de Brazil Churrascaria fits into just about every dieter's menu plan.

Low carb eaters will have all their expectations surpassed with a tempting carnivorous selection of umpteen cuts of sizzling beef, pork, lamb, sausage, and poultry. The meats are prepared in the healthiest style of cooking—slow roasting—where much of the fat drips off in the roasting process, so those looking for a lower fat option to sautéing, pan frying, or deep frying will also be able to indulge.

The Brazilian-style steakhouse also offers a garden full of healthy eats on a lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the

slow-roasted meats. A selection of fresh lettuces and vegetables may be standard for most salad bars, but **Texas de Brazil's** version goes a gourmet twist further, treating the palate to additional items like marinated portabella mushrooms, sweet roasted bell peppers, hearts of palm, sundried tomatoes, imported cheeses—including fresh buffalo mozzarella—sushi, home-made soups, and much more.

The salad bar is included in the continuous service meal with unlimited choices from the grilled meats, but for vegetarians or the non-meat eaters, a special price is offered for just the salad bar. Of course, for those looking to splurge while on vacation, **Texas de Brazil** will gladly serve their garlic mashed potatoes, traditional fried plantains, and their world-famous parmesan cheese bread as part of the meal.

Restaurant
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Monday - Sat 6 pm - 11
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Experience authentic regional ambiance every Friday evening at Pam-Pam Café

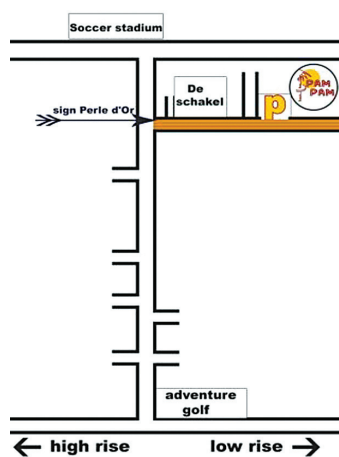


Pam-Pam Café, located in the charming Perle D'Or Resort in Bubali, is the place to be on Friday evenings for a great taste of regional music, dance, food and hospitality, as proprietors and hosts Nico and Monique van de Borne welcome guests for their weekly "Latin Night."

Pam-Pam Café is situated in a delightful tropical setting that is the perfect backdrop for a show by 2002 World Salsa Champions Janice and Oslin Boekhoudt, who run their Pachanga Dance School

out Perle D'Or. They and their dance troupe put on a show of the exotic Zouk, originating from the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and inspiration for the Brazilian Lambada. If their sensual movements inspire any audience members, they can sign up at Pam-Pam for private dance lessons from the Pachanga crew, which also teach Salsa and Merengue.

In addition to the island music and dance, reasonably priced snacks (10.50 in Aruban florins (\$6) for an Assorted Snack Platter or Buffalo Wings among



other choices) and cocktails are available throughout the evening. From 11 PM until closing time, Pam-Pam offers a special on top shelf whiskey for only 6 Aruban



florins (\$3.50)

If you are looking for the "real deal" in Caribbean entertainment and ambiance and a chance to rub elbows with islanders, schedule Pam-Pam Café as your Friday night entertainment!

Pam Pam restaurant

First-time patrons will be pleasantly surprised by an appealing a la carte menu that is quite affordably priced, and main courses, (25) which are priced between \$13 / \$22.

Pam-Pam's house specialty is a unique method of preparation, which presently,

in Aruba, is found only at their establishment and which they have dubbed their "Gourmet Meal." A grill and a collection of the freshest of ingredients for the various dishes ordered are assembled tableside, and patrons prepare the food themselves, controlling their preference of seasonings and garnishes, along with degree of doneness, providing a unique and personal taste treat. It is suggested that reservations for this singular dining experience be made one day in advance.

When you want to see restaurants menu, visit: www.visitaruba.com
Phone: 5877710 or 5932660 ☐



Continued from Page B1
It was attended by guests of honor, Curacao Gezaghebber Lizanne Dindial and Aruba's Minister of Tourism & Transportation Ing Edison Briesen, together with legendary developer and philanthropist Jacob Gelt Dekker, owner of Kura Hulanda Resorts. Also extending heartfelt congratulations to ECO



performance by Futuro Memoria Di Corsau who dramatically staged the island's history through the ages, by means of dance, song, fire, drums and ritualistic conch blowing. In her address to the dignitaries Villacres stated that she believes in Curacao as an exceptional destination blessed by rich history and genuine culture

and that her company would be promoting the island and training its people in the MICE arena, the meetings and incentives field, working with local vendors and purveyors. Villacres had traveled the globe, she explained, as President and CEO of her company she tirelessly drums up group business and deliver lucrative contracts year around. Villacres also thanked the ECO DMS, she says, is a proud green company and will spread corporate social responsibility, spearheading conservation efforts, hence to donation to Fundashon Korsou Limpi Bunita.

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DMS and its Curacao team with National Sales Manager Janine de Windt at the helm, members of the Curacao Tourism Development Board, Managing Director Evita Nita and board member Reginald Martes, with union leader Kenneth Valport, the Vice President of CHATA Billy Jonckheer, President/ Director, Kura Hulanda Hotels Peter H. Heinen, General Manager Shirley Geerman, Director of Real Estate Sales Paul Siegel, Professor of Medical Oncology Dr. H.M. (Bob) Pinedo, Five Star Promotions Phyllis Hernandez, and Cesar Rodriguez Fundashon



Korsou Limpi Bunita, who received a donation from ECO DMS on the occasion of its grand opening party. The entertainment program included a traditional Kai Orgel with dancers in folkloric costumes, a salon couple interpreting an elegant Waltz and Danza, and a mesmerizing



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Mike Eman Toured Plantation In Calabas With AVP Youngsters

CALABAS - Saturday afternoon Dechi Tromp invited a group of AVP teenagers to take a tour of his plantation at Calabas. By the end of the tour you could see every single one of the youngsters had a satisfied smile on their face. Dechi's explanation was unique and entertained the children. Dechi's knowledge is based on his love for the job and also on his years of experience in this great work and this love is reflected in his explanation.

The youngsters were given an explanation on the different types of planting, for example, a long pumpkin, cucumber, corn and grinded corn. At

the end of the tour, all were given a cucumber as a gift, but most importantly they learned things that will stay with them for ever.

Some of the children found the explanation so interesting that they agreed to come back for a more detailed explanation so they can do something similar at home: A new generation that will carry on the knowledge of our elders for the future.

Mike Eman was very pleased with this afternoon, because he knows Dechi and also knows of Dechi's expertise.

According to Mike "our children have to know and learn from the experience of our elders. Dechi has a lot of knowledge and expertise to give the explanation to the youngsters.



When you see the eyes of the youngsters sparkle and open

wide, you understand that they have grasped, appreciated and

enjoyed the beauty behind this job." □



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Blacks are most obese group, study finds

By MIKE STOBBE,
AP Medical Writer

ATLANTA — Nearly 36 percent of black Americans are obese — much more than other major racial or ethnic groups — and that gap exists in most states, a new federal

study finds. About 29 percent of Hispanics and 24 percent of whites are obese, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Thursday. Overall, about 26 percent of U.S. adults are obese. Racial differences in obesity rates

have been reported before, and health officials were not surprised to see larger proportions of blacks tipping the scales. But the new CDC report is the first to look at the gap state-by-state, finding blacks had significantly higher obesity rates in 21 states and somewhat higher rates in many others. Experts believe there are several reasons for the differences. People with lower incomes often have less access to medical care, exercise facilities and more expensive, healthier food. In many places, minorities are disproportionately poor.

“Poverty is a very strong driver of obesity,” said Kelly Brownell, director of Yale University’s Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity.

Attitudes about weight also

are believed to be a factor, said Dr. Liping Pan, a CDC epidemiologist. Researchers cited a 2008 study that found black and Hispanic women had significantly lower odds of being dissatisfied with their body size than white women.

“Black and Hispanics are more accepting of high weight,” Pan said, adding that heavy people who are satisfied with their size are not likely to diet or exercise. However, it could be that over time as people struggle with poverty and environment “they come to accept the higher weights,” Brownell said. Obesity is based on the body mass index, a calculation using height and weight. A 5-foot-7-inch adult who weighs 190 pounds would have a BMI of 30, which is considered the

threshold for obesity. The data comes from a national telephone survey of more than 1 million Americans over the years 2006 through 2008. For blacks, the highest obesity rate was in Maine, where 45 percent were obese. Tennessee was the state where Hispanic obesity was most common. And West Virginia was the fattest state for whites.

But generally, obesity was most common for both blacks and whites in the South and Midwest. The study also broke down the groups by gender, and found black women were the heaviest, with 39 percent counted as obese. Black men were next, at 32 percent, then Hispanic women, 29 percent, Hispanic men, 28 percent, white men, 25 percent and white women, 22 percent. □



Pigs at a swine farm on the outskirts of Medellin, Colombia on April 28, 2009. Argentina has issued a nationwide alert after pigs were confirmed to have the swine flu virus.

(AFP/File/Raul Arboleda)

US swine flu deaths rise to 263

By MIKE STOBBE,
AP Medical Writer

ATLANTA — Health officials say their count of U.S. swine flu cases has surpassed 40,000, and deaths have risen to 263. Hospitalizations from swine flu total about 4,800. The numbers, released Friday, are up from 37,000 confirmed and probable cases and 211 reported last week.

Those are lab-confirmed and probable infections. CDC officials believe those cases are just the tip of the iceberg. They estimate more than 1 million Americans have been infected with the virus so far, though many probably had only a mild illness. □

UN health agency gives up on counting swine flu

LONDON — The World Health Organization says it will stop counting individual cases of swine flu.

Tracking individual swine flu cases is too overwhelming for countries where the virus is spreading widely, the agency says in a statement. WHO will no longer issue global totals of swine flu cases, although it will continue to track the global epidemic.

WHO says countries should look for signs the virus is mutating, such as changes in the way swine flu is spreading, surges in hospital visits or more severe cases.

The agency asks countries to report their first confirmed cases, then provide weekly case numbers with a description of their outbreaks.

WHO had reported nearly 95,000 cases including 429 deaths worldwide. But the numbers are outdated, with Britain estimating it had 55,000 new cases last week alone. □

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Jazz

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Accompanied by Guitarist Serghio Jansen
Directed by Ivan Jansen

Saturday, July 18
8 pm - 10 pm

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Aruba TODAY

Stocks edge lower after 4 days of big gains



A customer uses a Bank of America ATM in Charlotte, N.C., Friday, July 17, 2009. Bank of America became the third big bank with better than expected earnings, reporting a \$2.42 billion second-quarter profit even as losses from failed loans continued to rise.

(AP Photo/Chuck Burton)

By SARA LEPRO and
STEPHEN BERNARD,
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK — Mixed news from earnings reports has investors taking a pause after pushing stocks higher for four straight days.

Stocks were mostly lower Friday after Bank of America Corp. and Citigroup Inc. became the latest banks to report big second-quarter profits but also weakness in their loan portfolios. General Electric Co. beat earnings forecasts, but its revenue came up short.

Investors have been keenly

focused on earnings reports this week, hoping to find more concrete signs of life in the economy and validation that a huge rally in stocks this spring was justified. So far, the results have been varied.

Solid profits from some of the largest U.S. banks have been encouraging, but there are still signs that the recession's grip hasn't eased as much as hoped, such as higher loan defaults.

BofA, which has struggled more than some of its peers from loan losses, beat Wall Street's estimates just as Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and JPMorgan Chase & Co. did earlier this week. However its profit was down from a year earlier as losses from delinquent loans continued to climb.

Citigroup, another troubled bank, surprised Wall Street with a \$3 billion profit instead of the big loss analysts had expected, but results were boosted by the sale of a majority stake in its Smith Barney brokerage.

GE's earnings fell 49 percent on losses at its financial unit and weakness in industrial businesses. The profits topped forecasts, but revenue came in \$3 billion below estimates. Shares dropped more than 6 percent, or 76 cents, to \$11.64. Much stronger results earlier in the week from Goldman and Intel Corp. helped drive

stocks higher, and going in to Friday's session major market indicators were ahead about 7 percent for the week.

"We're seeing some very good news all in all," said Kent Engelke, chief economic strategist at Capitol Securities Management. "I also believe the market is ahead of itself. I think we're getting the classic case of buy on rumor and sell on fact."

In early afternoon trading, the Dow Jones industrials rose 4.98, or 0.1 percent, to 8,716.80. The broader Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 2.68, or 0.3 percent, at 938.06, while the Nasdaq composite index lost 4.59, or 0.2 percent, to 1,880.44.

About four stocks fell for every three that rose on the New York Stock Exchange where volume came to 716.8 million shares compared with 513.8 million shares at the same time a day earlier. Trading was heavy because of the expiration of options contracts, which can also increase the volatility.

Financial stocks mostly fell. Bank of America fell 26 cents to \$12.91, while Citigroup added a penny to \$3.04.

One exception was CIT Group Inc., whose shares more than doubled, jumping 47 cents to 88 cents, on speculation that the troubled lender might be able to avoid bankruptcy. □

Oil extends rally, jumps above \$63



Gas burns at an oil refinery in Shuaiba, 25km southwest of Basra in Iraq. Oil prices have fallen on profit-taking after surging a day earlier on data pointing to crude demand recovery in the United States, the world's biggest energy consuming nation.

(AFP/File/Essam al-Sudani)

By CHRIS KAHN,
AP Energy Writer

NEW YORK — Oil prices are extending their rally into a third straight day, rising above \$63 a barrel Friday for the first time in 10 days.

Benchmark crude for August delivery jumped \$1.80 to \$63.82 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. In London, Brent prices climbed \$2.95 to \$65.70 a barrel on the ICE Futures exchange.

Earlier in the week, crude futures were tugged higher by a rally on Wall Street, and they continued to rise as China reported that its economy grew faster in the second quarter. But with the country still swimming in surplus oil and consumer demand hovering around 10-year lows, analysts struggled to find a fundamental reason for an extended rally in oil.

Political unrest in Iran, combined with reports of union troubles with Iraq's Southern Oil Co., may have sparked concerns about whether oil production would suffer later this year.

But "a lot of it is pure

nonsense," Peter Beutel of Cameron Hanover said. "I have trouble understanding what's going on."

In Tehran, Islamic cleric Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani criticized Iran's crackdown on election protests at a Friday prayer service. Outside, police and militiamen fired tear gas at protesters who sided with opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi.

Iran sits on 136.2 billion barrels of oil, ranking behind Saudia Arabia and Canada in proven reserves, according to the Energy Information Administration. Ongoing political turmoil there could disrupt supplies in the future and possibly force crude prices higher.

"The Iranian regime may be falling apart at the edges, and you don't want to be short on oil when this is happening," analyst Phil Flynn said.

Oil prices also were buoyed by a U.S. government report that new home construction rose in June to the highest level in seven months. And Bank of America Corp. and Citigroup Inc. reported big second-quarter profits.

But analyst Stephen Schork said investors, especially those who have no commercial use for the oil contracts they're buying, aren't basing their decisions on the economy's present condition. They're simply buying oil right now on the expectation that the economy will eventually heal.

"We're trying to get at the bottom of the next great rally," Schork said. "It's just one giant crapshoot."

Meanwhile, retail gas prices continued to fall for the 26th straight day. Pump prices dropped overnight to a new national average of \$2.481 a gallon, according to auto club AAA, Wright Express and Oil Price Information Service. □



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US housing construction picks up as market bottoms

by Veronica Smith

WASHINGTON (AFP) – US home construction picked up in June after strong gains in May, the government said Friday in a report that suggested a turnaround in the moribund housing market. The Commerce Department reported construction starts on privately owned homes rose 3.6 percent in June to a seasonally adjusted rate of 582,000, the fastest pace since November.

The jump in housing starts was much stronger than the 530,000 pace expected by most analysts and followed a revised 562,000 starts in May, up 30,000 from the initial estimate.

Construction permits surged 8.7 percent to 563,000, topping the consensus forecast of 524,000.

“This was the most positive housing report in ages,” said Patrick Newport, economist at IHS Global Insight.

“Not every number was up, but the key ones -- the single- and multi-family permits -- both improved,” he said.

Both housing starts and construction permits had hit all-time lows in April as a

severe recession deepened the collapse of the housing boom more than two years ago.

While the June data extended strong gains in May, on an annual basis the numbers revealed the depth of the distress in the housing market where a years-long bubble burst more than two years ago.

Housing starts were 46.0 percent below the June 2008 level and construction permits were down 52.0 percent.

“Home construction has probably been the worst segment of the economy as housing starts fell about 80 percent from the peak. That finally seems to be changing,” said Joel Naroff of Naroff Economic Advisors.

The big increase in permits in the face of a glut of unsold homes on the market, falling prices and spiking foreclosures, appeared to signal the market is on the mend.

“Permit requests were up solidly across the nation so we should see construction continue to advance,” Naroff said.

The number of permits to build single-family homes, the largest segment of the housing

construction sector, rose for the third month running, by 5.9 percent, after gains of 7.4 percent in May and 5.0 percent in April.

Permits for buildings with five units or more shot up 18.8 percent in June.

“Based on June’s numbers, we should continue to see improving housing starts numbers nationally and across all four regions over the next two months,” Newport said.

“Moving further ahead, single-family starts will continue to improve, but the recovery will be a slow one, lasting two to three years,” he added.

Ian Shepherdson of High Frequency Economics sounded a note of caution about whether the data is the start of a real rebound or



View of a construction site in Las Vegas, Nevada. US home construction picked up in June after strong gains in May, the government said Friday in a report that suggested a turnaround in the moribund housing market.

(AFP/Getty Images/File/Ethan Miller)

a return to the trend before the collapse of Wall Street investment bank Lehman Brothers last September, which accelerated the global financial crisis.

“Certainly the still-massive

inventory overhang in the new home market does not suggest homebuilders need to increase production. Still, we are happy that the post-Lehman disaster is over,” Shepherdson said. □



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Debbie Rowe sues woman over TV interview



FILE - In this April 28, 2005 file photo, Debbie Rowe, Michael Jackson's ex-wife, arrives at the Santa Barbara County courthouse in Santa Maria, Calif.

(AP Photo/Aaron Lambert, Pool, FILE)

By ANTHONY MCCARTNEY, AP Entertainment Writer
LOS ANGELES — Michael Jackson's ex-wife Deborah Rowe is striking back at a woman who claimed in a TV interview that Rowe told her she didn't want custody of the

pop star's children.

Rowe filed a defamation and invasion-of-privacy lawsuit against Rebecca White of Florida. The lawsuit, filed in Los Angeles late Thursday, seeks unspecified damages, but specifically targets any money that White may have been paid by TV show "Extra" for an interview that aired earlier this week.

An e-mail sent to a publicist for "Extra" seeking comment wasn't immediately returned. White couldn't immediately be reached for comment Friday.

Rowe's lawsuit states she hasn't communicated with White since Jackson's death last month.

In the interview, White claimed Rowe had emphatically stated in an e-mail exchange that she didn't want custody of Jackson's three children. Rowe had two children while married to the singer. □

Actor James Caviezel hurt in motorcycle accident



File - Actor James Caviezel watches the action at the NCAA West Regional semifinals Thursday, March 27, 2003, in Anaheim, Calif. Caviezel suffered minor injuries when a man hurled a bicycle into the path of his motorcycle Thursday July 16, 2009 about 14 miles southeast of Leavenworth Wash.

(AP Photo/Kevork Djansezian, File)

LEAVENWORTH, Wash. — The Washington State Patrol

says James Caviezel suffered cuts and bruises when a man hurled a bicycle into the path of his Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

Trooper Rich Magnussen says "The Passion of the Christ" actor was taken Thursday to Cascade Medical Center in Leavenworth.

Magnussen says the 40-year-old Caviezel, of Woodland Hills, Calif., was wearing a helmet, and that "it could have been a lot worse." The trooper says he doesn't know why the actor was in the area about 14 miles southeast of this city in north-central Washington.

Caviezel portrayed Jesus in Mel Gibson's movie. He was born in Mount Vernon, Wash. Magnussen says mental issues may be involved in why the 42-year-old Wenatchee man tossed the bike. □



Coroner: Jackson autopsy results in 2 weeks

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles County coroner's office says it will take longer than first expected to complete Michael Jackson's full autopsy report.

The office previously expected to wrap up the report late this week or early next week. But Assistant Chief Coroner Ed Winter said Thursday that it's now expected to be two weeks away. He declined to explain the reason for the delay.

The toxicology report should include what drugs were in Jackson's system when he died and whether they caused his death. That will be key in determining whether any criminal charges are brought. Jackson died June 25. □

MJ's brothers to attend Jamaica's Reggae Sumfest

KINGSTON, Jamaica — Three of Michael Jackson's brothers expect to attend next month's Reggae Sumfest in Jamaica which is dedicated this year to the deceased king of pop.

Summerfest Productions says Marlon, Tito and Randy Jackson confirmed they will be at the weeklong music festival's International Night. It will feature Toni Braxton and reggae singer Damian Marley.

Spokesman Johnny Gourzong said Thursday that a Jackson family representative contacted the promoter after the company sent a letter of condolence following Michael Jackson's death last month. □

Pepsi Slams Release of Jackson's Fiery Ad



Josh Grossberg

Los Angeles (E! Online) — The choice of a new generation is... voyeurism?

In the wake of footage surfacing online showing the filming of the infamous 1984 Pepsi commercial in which Michael Jackson's hair caught fire, the bottling company released a statement wondering aloud what the fascination about it is other than morbid curiosity.

"We don't know how the footage became available. Twenty-five years later, we'd question why anyone would want to share such frightening images. It was a terrifying event that we'll never forget," spokeswoman Nicole Bradley said.

And undoubtedly akin to something out of his Thriller video.

In the video promoting the soft drink, Jackson performs a retooled version of "Billy Jean" before 3,000 screaming fans (among the extras were comedians Kathy Griffin and Jon Lovitz—before they were famous) at L.A.'s Shrine Auditorium.

But on the sixth take, as Jackson struts down a staircase onto a stage, the background fireworks explode early. The singer starts making his way down the steps, but doesn't realize his hair has suddenly caught fire until he reaches the bottom and goes into his spin. Only then did he touch his head and realize his scalp was burning.

Stagehands gathered around Jackson and quickly doused the flames. But the Moonwalker was taken to a hospital with second- and third-degree burns on his head and face, an injury that required skin grafts.

It's now being speculated that the incident may have led to his dependence on prescription pain medication, an addiction he allegedly battled for the rest of his life. Pepsi later aired a version of the ad without the hair-raising moment and paid Jackson \$1.4 million for his pain and suffering, but the music legend ended up donating the money to a burn victim center.

Since Jackson's fiery performance bubbled up over the Internet and cable news two days ago, Pepsi initially declined to catch the wave and comment on it. But the company chose to speak out now not only to criticize the release of such imagery (and incidentally the public's grotesque obsession with it), but also to pay tribute to the late King of Pop, with whom it had the good fortune of working during his 1980s peak.

"We were grateful for Michael's recovery and for the chance to continue working with him on a number of successful projects," Bradley added. "As for Michael as an artist, his music helped us define a generation and, like everyone else, we're deeply saddened by his passing."

The rep also said Pepsi has no intention of pursuing legal action to stop the burn footage from airing and, in fact, isn't even sure who owns the rights. □





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'Transformers 2' becomes biggest-ever China hit

By MIN LEE,

AP Entertainment Writer

HONG KONG — The "Transformers" sequel has become China's biggest box office hit ever by earning 400 million Chinese yuan (\$59 million), a publicist for the country's leading state-run film company said Friday.

"Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen" surpassed the 11-year-old record of 360 million yuan set by "Titanic," spokesman Weng Li at the China Film Group, one of the country's two film importers, told The Associated Press.

"Titanic" made about \$43 million based on exchange rates in 1998, the year it was released.

Weng said the "Transformers" sequel, released June 24, received a wide release on several thousand screens. China had about 4,100 screens by the end of 2008. The first "Transformers" installment raked in 280 million yuan in 2007.

"This is a tremendous achievement for the market in China and clearly shows

that there is a strong growing demand for international films," said Mike Ellis, Asia-Pacific managing director of the Hollywood trade organization, Motion Picture Association of America.

The group wants China to relax its movie import quota of allowing in just 20 foreign blockbusters a year, aimed at boosting its domestic industry.

Weng said both installments of John Woo's two-part Chinese historical epic "Red Cliff" earned 300 million yuan (\$44 million) this year and last, as did Chinese director Feng Xiaogang's 2008 romantic comedy "If You Are the One."

"Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen," a science fiction movie, was apparently slightly censored. In the film's opening sequence, the Autobots and Decepticons battle in an industrial part of Shanghai, but when a U.S. military commander refers to the city, the word "Shanghai" is muffled.

Chinese censors are sensitive

In this film publicity image released by Paramount Pictures, Megan Fox, left, and Shia LaBeouf are shown in a scene from "Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen."

(AP Photo/Paramount Pictures, Jaimie Trueblood)

to portrayals of their country in foreign movies.

The "Transformers" record also highlights the earning potential of Hollywood films in China. But with piracy a lingering problem and moviegoing largely the habit of wealthier urbanites, the growing Chinese box office revenues remain small compared to the U.S.

The "Transformers" sequel earned \$62 million on its opening day in the U.S. alone. The \$200 million production has grossed \$348 million in the U.S. and \$380 million outside the country, according to the box office tracking Web site Box Office Mojo.

Chinese box office revenues totaled 4.3 billion yuan (\$630 million) in 2008, compared to \$9.8 billion in the U.S. in the same year. □



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auto-biography has been the concept behind Papillon Restaurant. The décor, the decorations and especially the restrooms wink at the thirteen terrible years Papillon spent in prison in French Guyana. Papillon restaurant's menu reflects the Frenchman's arduous journey to freedom: classic French dishes have been dusted with daring Caribbean flair and are a culinary journey for your taste buds. The spacious outside terrace is perfect for casual fine dining; the iron bars, flecks of rust and stains on the walls make one very glad not to be in Papillon's shoes in the 1940's! Charrière would undoubtedly have loved 'his' place on Aruba: this is luxury living for anyone!

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An undated photo provided by the Nashville Police Department shows Adrian Gilliam, 33, of LaVergne, Tenn. Gilliam was arrested by agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives for allegedly providing the gun later used to kill ex-NFL quarterback Steve McNair.

(AP Photo/ via Nashville Police Department) .

Feds arrest felon in sale of gun in McNair killing

By TRAVIS LOLLER, Associated Press Writer
NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Federal prosecutors announced gun charges Friday against a convicted murderer who admitted he sold the pistol that was used to kill ex-NFL quarterback Steve McNair. Adrian J. Gilliam Jr., 33, of LaVergne, Tenn., was arrested by agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. He is charged with being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm. Conviction could bring a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000, federal prosecutors said. A criminal complaint says that Gilliam — who was convicted in 1993 in Florida for murder and attempted armed robbery — told police he sold the gun to the woman who later shot McNair.

Continued on Page B3

Suicide bombers kill 8 at Jakarta Marriott, Ritz



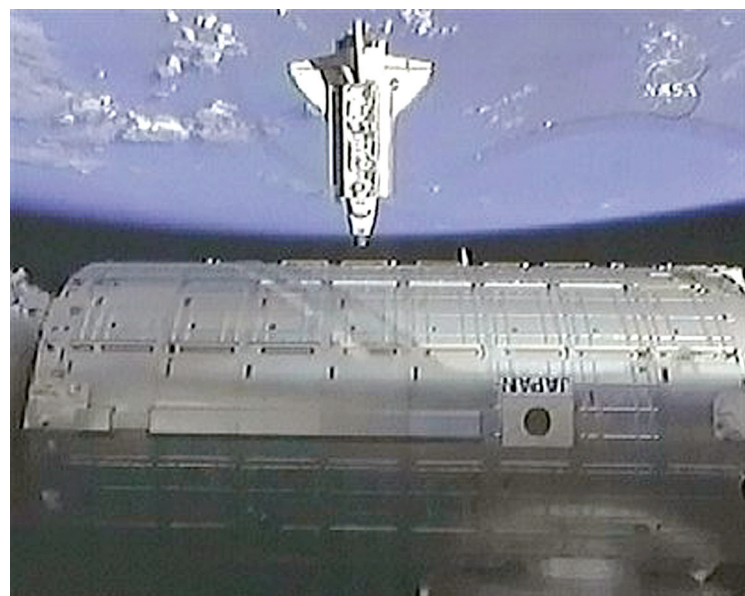
FILE - In this Monday, Sept. 8, 2003 file photo, security officers stand guard outside of JW Marriott Hotel at its reopening day in Jakarta, Indonesia. Bombs have exploded at the Ritz-Carlton and Marriott hotels in the Indonesian capital on Friday, ripping the facade off the Ritz. Police say. A man jogging by the hotels said he first heard a loud explosion at the Marriott. Five minutes later, a bomb followed at the Ritz.

(AP Photo/Dita Alangkara, File)

By ANTHONY DEUTSCH, Associated Press Writer

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Two days ago, they checked into room 1808 at the swank J.W. Marriott Hotel — smuggling explosives past metal detectors and security guards. Behind the closed door, investigators say the suicide attackers then assembled the bombs set off Friday at the Marriott and the Ritz-Carlton next door. The blasts killed at least eight people and wounded more than 50 — and broke a four-year lull in terrorism in the world's most populous Muslim nation. Although significantly weakened by a crackdown in recent years, the attacks indicated Islamic militants still have the means to mount deadly assaults, even in heavily protected areas of Indonesia's capital. The bombings also exposed the challenge of securing luxury hotels frequented by Westerners, a popular target for terrorists. A group of more than a dozen executives with American and other Western companies was holding a regular Friday morning meeting near the Marriott restaurant where the explosives were detonated, and many of them were among the victims, hospital lists showed.

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In this image rendered from video and released by NASA, the space shuttle Endeavour is shown as it approaches the international space station before docking Friday, July 17, 2009. The KIBO lab section of the space station is shown at bottom.

(AP Photo/NASA TV)

Space shuttle Endeavour arrives at space station

By MARCIA DUNN, AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — The space shuttle and space station hooked up Friday after a round-the-world chase, making for the biggest crowd ever gathered together in orbit — 13 Earthlings. Endeavour docked at the international space station as the two craft soared 220 miles above the Australian coast.

Once the hatches popped open, the seven shuttle astronauts floated into the space station, one by one, and embraced their six station colleagues. It was a bit of a mob scene, a floating jumble of dark shirts, beige pants and shorts, and white socks. “Welcome,” said the station’s skipper, Russian Gennady Padalka, positioned at the entrance.

“Thirteen is a pretty big number, but it’s going to be an outstanding visit for us,” said shuttle commander Mark Polansky. “We are just thrilled to be here.”

Besides being the biggest space gathering ever, it was the most diverse: seven Americans, two Russians, two Canadians, one Japanese and one Belgian. Twelve men, one woman. Four medical doctors. And engineers and pilots galore.

The station doubled in size, people-wise, at the end of May, and this was the first shuttle visit since then. Although 13 people have been in orbit before, they were scattered in separate spacecraft. The old under-the-same-roof crowd record was 10.

Their first team effort comes Saturday, when two of the shuttle astronauts venture out on the first of five planned spacewalks to help hook up a porch for Japan’s space station lab. The porch will be used to hold outdoor experiments.

Earlier Friday afternoon, as it was closing in for the linkup, Endeavour performed a backflip from 600 feet out so the station crew could photograph its entire surface and uncover any severe launch damage. Endeavour’s fuel tank lost more foam insulation than usual during Wednesday’s launch, and some of the smaller pieces struck the shuttle, leaving a series of dings.

NASA managers say the dings appear to be superficial and pose no threat to the shuttle. But they want to make sure they don’t miss something serious, as was the case during Columbia’s doomed flight in 2003. □



Obama to Congress: Don't lose heart on health care

By DAVID ESPO,
AP Special Correspondent
WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama, insistent that health care legislation will still clear Congress, urged lawmakers strongly on Friday to write stiffer cost-cutting provisions into the bills taking shape slowly in the House and Senate.

“What we want to do is force the Congress to make sure that they are acting” on recommendations lawmakers receive to hold down Medicare and Medicaid spending, the president said, rather than allowing reports to sit unused on a shelf.

He spoke from the White House, near the end of a week of tumult for the legislation atop his domestic agenda.

“Now is not the time to lose heart,” he declared.

A few hours earlier, two House

committees approved their portions of the sweeping health care bill over Republican objections.

That left one more panel to act, but conservative Democrats were rebelling, demanding additional measures to hold down skyrocketing costs.

Given the complexities, as well as fresh calls for delay in the Senate, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., opened the door to pushing off a vote past the early August timeline she and Obama laid out weeks ago.

Whatever the difficulties, she predicted legislation would pass that will transform the nation's health care system, extending coverage to millions who lack it while slowing the growth in costs generally.

“It is really historic. It's transformation. It's momentous,” she told reporters at a news

conference.

If anything, Obama tried to project even more confidence. Ticking off a list of accomplishments to date, he said, “We are going to get this done. We will reform health care. it will happen this year. I'm absolutely convinced of that.”

Without the overhaul, he said, “no one's health insurance is going to be secure, because you're going to continue to see premiums going up at astronomical rates.”

Obama's call for additional steps to hold down costs came one day after the head of the Congressional Budget Office told Congress the legislation taking shape so far would fail to accomplish that.

Those remarks by Douglas Elmendorf produced fresh criticism from Republicans, and gave pause to Democrats, as well. □



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MCNAIR

Continued from Page B1

McNair was shot to death on July 4 at his condo by his 20-year-old mistress, Sahel Kazemi, who then turned the gun on herself.

Investigators said Friday that Gilliam used a photo provided by police to identify Kazemi as the person who bought the gun. Gilliam was assigned a public defender at a hearing Friday afternoon, but a hearing to set bond was delayed until Wednesday.

"No one denies this is a tragedy," Gilliam's public defender Hugh Mundy said. "Steve McNair was one of Nashville's heroes. A lot of lives have already been ruined. But Mr. Gilliam is a decent, hard-working family man and there's no reason to ruin his life too."

Detectives traced the gun, a 9 mm Bryco/Jennings, to its 2002 sale at a pawn shop, according to the complaint. Gilliam eventually bought it from an individual for \$100 about a year or year and a half ago. Investigators said Gilliam told them he bought the gun for protection after his home was burglarized, and police reports indicate he did report a burglary about the time of the gun purchase.

According to court documents, Gilliam told detectives he sold the gun to Kazemi for \$100. Nashville Police Chief Ronal Serpas said at a news conference of federal and local officials Friday that Gilliam decided to sell the gun because his wife was afraid to have it in their house.

Gilliam was in federal custody awaiting his initial court appearance Friday afternoon. It wasn't immediately clear if he has an attorney.

Police said last week that Kazemi purchased "a fully loaded 9 mm pistol from a private individual" who met her in the parking lot of the mall where she worked at a Dave & Busters restaurant.

Kazemi met Gilliam when she was trying to sell her car. She mentioned to him that she was looking to buy a gun and he told her he had one for sale, police said. The sale took place two days before McNair's shooting, outside the restaurant where Kazemi worked and first met McNair.

Authorities believe McNair was asleep when Kazemi put the pistol to his head and pulled the trigger. She put two more slugs into his chest and a fourth bullet into the other side of his head before shooting herself.

McNair, a married father of four, walked away from the NFL last year. "Air McNair" was known as a gutsy quarterback who played through serious injuries and led his Tennessee Titans to a Super Bowl.

U.S. Attorney Edward Yarbrough said Kazemi's age did not make the sale of the gun illegal. A licensed dealer is barred from selling a gun to someone younger than 21, but private sales to people older than 18 are legal, he said.

Yarbrough said one of the top objectives of federal gun laws prohibiting felons from possessing guns is "to thwart and prevent violent crime such as the two deaths in this case."

Jim Cavanaugh, the ATF special agent in charge in Nashville, held up a pistol similar to the one used to kill McNair, and said, "A convicted felon cannot receive it, possess it, buy it, store it, hold it, shoot it, aim it, clean it, or do anything with it."

Though the gun sale in question did not involve a licensed gun dealer, the ATF recently warned all gun dealers in Tennessee that they must still comply with federal gun laws despite a new state law aimed at easing such requirements for weapons manufactured and sold in-state. □

Witness: Nervous Alamo cut up explicit photos

By JON GAMBRELL,
Associated Press Writer

TEXARKANA, Ark. — A woman who says she was "married" to evangelist Tony Alamo at age 8 testified at his sex-crimes trial Friday that the minister likely cut into tiny pieces the explicit photos of her he took of her around that time.

Defense lawyer Phillip Kuhn had asked why, if Alamo had taken such photos — as the woman testified a day earlier — no child pornography was found during a September raid on Alamo's property near Fouke, a tiny town southeast of Texarkana. The woman, now 18, said Alamo was paranoid and often sliced up pictures.

"We had to vacuum the floor for all the little pieces he missed," she said.

Alamo, 74, is accused of taking five girls across state lines for sex. He has pleaded not guilty. Defense lawyers say the government has targeted the ministry for prosecution, and Alamo has said the Vatican is behind the accusations.

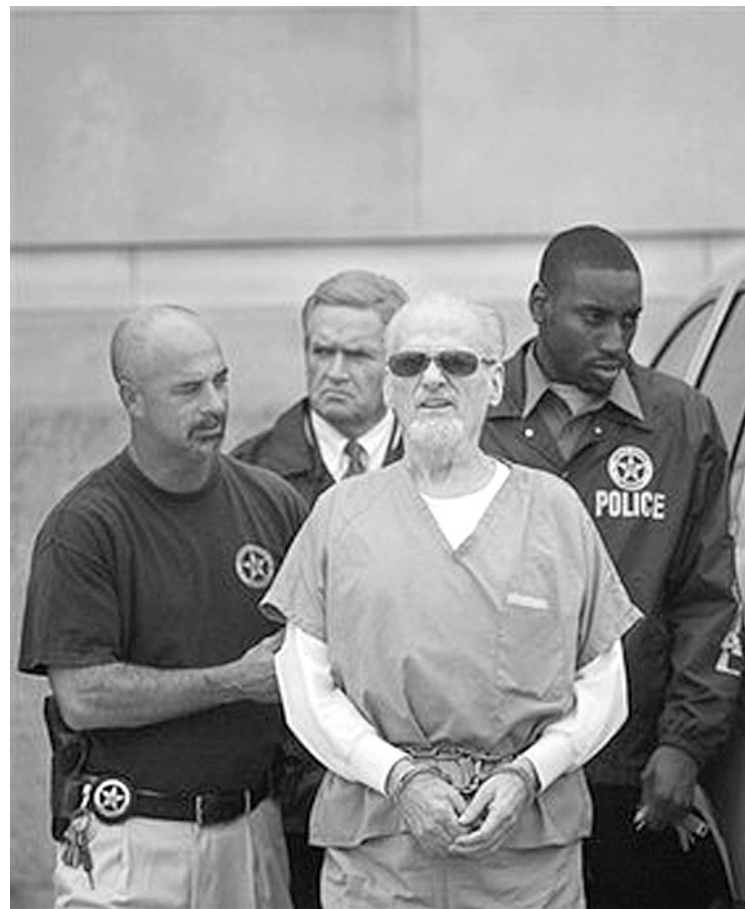
The woman, who testified Thursday that Alamo groped her after their "wedding" and began having sex with her when she was a 9-year-old third-grader, said her parents worked against her when she tried to obtain help from social workers after escaping from the minister's Arkansas compound in 2006.

She said New Mexico officials rejected her attempt to enter foster care after they called her parents, who are key Alamo deputies.

"What are they going to do when my parents say nothing ever happened and I was a liar?" the woman said.

The woman said she eventually received help from Arkansas child-welfare officers. Her story helped prompt a raid on Alamo's compound.

Kuhn also there was reason to doubt allegations made at the time of the raid that young girls were at risk because of the woman's allegations.



FILE - In this Tuesday July 14, 2009 file picture, evangelist Tony Alamo, center, is led from the federal courthouse in downtown Texarkana Ark. following opening statements in his trial. Alamo is charged with taking underage girls across state lines for sex.

(AP Photo/Texarkana Gazette, Evan Lewis)

"There were other people in danger and no one that you told did anything to protect them for four months?" Kuhn asked.

While being questioned by prosecutors Thursday, the woman noted that she did some office filing after "marrying" Alamo at age 8 but that she wasn't allowed to answer the telephone.

"I was too young," she said. She said at one point after their "wedding" she asked Alamo why he had selected her.

"He said, 'Because you were cute,'" she testified. "It wasn't God's will that he married me. It's just because he thought I was cute."

Her testimony left jurors red-eyed and shaking their heads. The Associated Press generally does not identify those who say they were victims of sex crimes.

Defense lawyers have largely left the sex and underage marriage claims unchallenged, though they have questioned witnesses' memories and whether they had been coached

by authorities.

Under Kuhn's questioning Friday, the woman acknowledged that she received counseling at a center that caters to former cult members at the same time as two other prosecution witnesses. She said witnesses also ate a dinner together before the trial but that all were cautioned to not talk about the case. She also said that FBI agents and prosecutors had given her gifts since she stepped forward: an \$80 Wal-Mart gift card, balloons and flowers on her birthday and a Valentine's Day-themed blanket when she was having a rough time. The FBI also provided her with a cell phone so they could keep in touch with her.

A Florida woman who testified against Alamo on Wednesday said she was "married" to him at age 15 and raised objections to Alamo taking an 8-year-old as a bride. A woman from Texas told jurors the minister made light of taking a young girl on the road as a wife and sex partner. □



**"FAVI FUNDACION
CU VISION"**



President Barack Obama speaks about health care, Friday, July 17, 2009, in the Diplomatic Room of the White House in Washington.

(AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

Obama says Congress must cut medical costs

WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama says Congress should be required to adopt experts' recommendations for cutting health care costs.

Obama said Friday from the White House that independent commissions of doctors and hospitals have made good proposals for high-quality medical care at lower costs. But he said the recommendations are generally ignored.

He said he wants to force lawmakers to make sure they are acting on these recommendations. □

Clinton in India to strengthen links with 'global player'

by Lachlan Carmichael

MUMBAI (AFP) – US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton arrived in India Friday hoping to deepen strategic ties with an emerging player on the world stage in security, trade, arms control and climate change.

Her first stop in the country's financial and entertainment capital Mumbai, includes meetings with key business leaders, educational professionals and a women's group, as well as leading Bollywood actor Aamir Khan. In her maiden trip to the South Asian nation as Washington's chief diplomat, Clinton will also pay tribute to the 166 people who died in last year's Islamist militant attacks on the city.

She heads to the capital New Delhi Sunday for talks with Prime Minister Manmohan

Singh and Foreign Minister S.M. Krishna before flying to Thailand to lead the US delegation at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) talks.

Clinton said this week that President Barack Obama's administration was committed to strengthening ties with India's new Congress-led government and saw the world's biggest democracy as a major regional and global player.

In a front-page article in the Times of India newspaper Friday, she praised India's recent economic success and emphasised the two countries' shared interests and values and already close ties in medicine, finance and education.

Closer cooperation was vital to tackle global security threats, nuclear proliferation and climate change, as well



US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, seen here on July 16, 2009, arrived in India Friday for a three-day visit aimed at deepening strategic ties with a country viewed as a global player on trade, arms control and climate change.

(AFP/Getty Images/File/Brendan Hoffman)

as opening up trade and new markets, she wrote.

"I hope a new era of stronger cooperation between India and the United States will be one of the signature accomplishments of our new governments," she added. "The world has a lot riding on our cooperation."

Ties between Washington and New Delhi were frosty during the Cold War and the two countries were at loggerheads over the latter's decision in 1998 to test an atom bomb and gatecrash the elite club of nuclear-armed nations.

Relations have been hit more recently by sharp differences on the Doha round of trade liberalisation talks, with India urging the United States and others to return to the table rather than wait for the global economic crisis to ease.

Obama is keen to build on ties which were transformed last year when his predecessor George W. Bush and Singh signed a pact opening up sales of civilian nuclear technology to India for the first time in three decades.

Clinton's visit could see an announcement of the two locations India has chosen for US firms to build multi-billion-dollar nuclear power plants, aides said this week. India's refusal to sign the international non-proliferation treaty (NPT) has hung over the deal but Clinton wrote in the Times of India that they were still committed. □

Sotomayor wins backers after smooth hearings

By JULIE HIRSCHFELD DAVIS

and JESSE J. HOLLAND,

WASHINGTON – Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor won her first public pledges of support from Senate Republicans and one prominent GOP opponent, after a smooth performance at her confirmation hearings that has placed her firmly on track to become the high court's first Latina and the first Democratic-named justice in 15 years.

Three centrist Republicans announced they'd support Sotomayor even as the Senate's minority leader, Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, said he'd vote no. The split was a vivid reflection of the divisions in the GOP as the party faces a tricky vote on Sotomayor, wary of alienating its conservative base but equally afraid to anger Hispanic and women voters.

Sens. Richard Lugar of Indiana, the Senate's most senior Republican, Mel Martinez of Florida, its lone Hispanic Republican, and Olympia Snowe of Maine all announced they'd vote for Sotomayor,

praising her qualifications and her testimony at four days of Judiciary Committee hearings this week.

"I was pleased that Judge Sotomayor repeatedly recognized in her responses this week that 'the job of a judge is to apply the law' rather than independently make policy, and that it is the law, rather than ones own sympathies that 'compels conclusions in cases,' Snowe said.

McConnell planned a speech Monday in which he'll say the 55-year-old appeals court judge's past statements demonstrate an "alarming lack of respect for the notion of equal justice," and question her ability to separate her sympathies and prejudices from her decisions.

McConnell joins other GOP conservatives who are lining up firmly against Sotomayor. But with solid backing from Democrats, who enjoy a lopsided majority, and a growing number of Republicans, there's virtually no doubt the judge will be confirmed as the 111th Supreme Court justice.

Republicans have said they



won't try to block or even delay a vote to confirm her, which is expected in early August.

Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama, the senior Republican on the Judiciary Committee, said Thursday that neither he nor any GOP senator he knows of is interested in holding up the vote.

The panel is likely to cast the first votes on Sotomayor's nomination in late July.

Republican-turned-Democratic Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, a member of the committee who had hinted strongly that he would support Sotomayor, made it official Friday with a statement in which he said he'd vote for her and urge colleagues to do the same.

Sotomayor "displayed intellect, restraint and judicial demeanor" at her hearings, Specter said. □



This combination of undated photos released by the Jersey City Police Department shows Hassan Shakur, 32, left, and Amanda Anderson, 22. The two were killed in a shootout that left eight officers injured and began on the street but ended in an apartment building where drugs and violence are commonplace, neighborhood residents say.

(AP Photo/Jersey City Police Department)

2 officers remain hospitalized after NJ shootout

By DAVID PORTER,
Associated Press Writer

JERSEY CITY, N.J. — Two police officers seriously injured during a wild gun battle remained in critical condition Friday, while another officer whose bulletproof vest likely saved his life prepared to be released from the hospital.

Police continued to hold vigil at Jersey City Medical Center for Officers Marc DiNardo and Michael Camacho. They were among eight officers wounded in a shootout that left two armed robbery suspects dead.

DiNardo, 37, who was shot in the left side of the face, remained in critical condition Friday, Jersey City Police Director Sam Jefferson said. Doctors said Thursday that DiNardo had no signs of life when he was brought in and that the officer had to be revived several times.

“Everybody’s upbeat. They’re looking for him to pull out of it,” Jefferson said Friday.

Camacho, 25, who was shot in the neck, had improved to the point where doctors were considering removing a breathing tube so he could breathe on his own, Jefferson said.

Officer Frank Molina, 35, who was shot in the back, was expected to be released from the hospital Friday afternoon or evening.

“The two slugs knocked him down,” Jefferson said. “That vest saved his life.”

Thursday’s shootout erupted during a stakeout. Police said Hassan Shakur had been hiding a pump-action shotgun under a monk’s robe when police approached him in the street at about 5:15 a.m., and he began firing.

The shootout ended when SWAT officers fought their way into a third-floor apartment where the suspects had taken cover at about 6:45 a.m. The officers were met by shotgun blasts that ripped through the apartment building’s walls and doors.

Shakur, 32, and Amanda Anderson, 22, were pronounced dead at the scene. They had been wanted in connection with a June 18 armed robbery in Jersey City, where a man was shot with the same shotgun, police said. They also were suspected of a similar robbery in South Carolina.

Jefferson said the release and publishing of a surveillance video from the June 18 robbery led to “a lot of calls, from all over” from people who recognized the pair, including at least one relative of Anderson.

He said they may have been expecting a confrontation with police.

“Who comes out to move their vehicle with a shotgun? They knew they were being hunted, and they were ready for anything,” Jefferson said. □

LA man held in wife’s death during Mexico cruise



This undated photo provided by California Department of Motor Vehicles via The San Diego Union-Tribune shows Shirley McGill. Robert McGill was being held in the death of his wife, Shirley McGill, aboard the Carnival Elation. She was killed during a five-day trip to Cabo San Lucas, said Keith Slotter, special agent in charge of the FBI’s San Diego bureau.

(AP Photo/California Department of Motor Vehicles via The San Diego Union-Tribune)

By GILLIAN FLACCUS,
Associated Press Writer

SAN DIEGO — The first hint of trouble aboard the Carnival Elation came three days into the luxury cruise to Mexico, when a passenger contacted the ship’s security to express concerns that a woman might be dead.

Crew members went to Shirley McGill’s cabin on Tuesday evening and found her body, but her husband, Robert McGill, was not in the room, said Keith Slotter, a special agent in charge of the FBI’s San Diego bureau.

On Thursday, Robert McGill was taken into custody from the cruise ship more than six hours after it returned to port in San Diego.

He will be charged in the murder of his wife, Slotter said.

Slotter wouldn’t say why the passenger who notified security was concerned, but said several hours may have passed between the death and the body’s discovery.

McGill, of Los Angeles, was later detained and held in the ship’s brig until the boat docked Thursday morning. □



Chicago firefighters search an area outside a factory where an explosion injured two people Friday, July 17, 2009, on Chicago’s West Side. Fire officials are blaming a chemical reaction for the explosion that caused a partial collapse of the one-story Columbus Foods plant.

(AP Photo/M. Spencer Green)

2 injured in explosion at Chicago factory

CHICAGO — Officials say an explosion at a Chicago biodiesel manufacturing plant that injured two workers was caused by a chemical reaction.

Deputy Fire Chief Gene Ryan says the reaction caused a partial collapse of the one-story Columbus Foods plant. The explosion Friday morning sent bricks and debris flying hundreds of feet in the air and temporarily shut down some commuter train lines.

Rick Cummisford, the quality control supervisor at the plant, says two workers were mixing chemicals Friday morning when a reaction caused the explosion. He says the plant manufactures biodiesel out of vegetable oil.

Cummisford says one worker received scratches and the other was splashed with chemicals.

Ryan says hazardous materials teams have deemed the building safe. □

NY man guilty of hate crime in transgender slaying

By WILLIAM KATES,
Associated Press Writer

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — A jury on Friday convicted a man of manslaughter as a hate crime for killing a transgender woman he shot outside a house party last year.

Dwight DeLee was found guilty of first-degree manslaughter for the fatal shooting of 22-year-old Lateisha Green outside a Syracuse house party in November because of anti-gay bias. He becomes just the second person in the U.S. convicted of a hate crime that involved the death of a transgender victim.

The Onondaga County Court jury delivered its verdict after deliberating for about six hours over two days.

DeLee faces additional prison time because he was convicted of a hate crime.

DeLee was charged with second-degree murder as a hate crime. But Judge William Walsh told the jury that it could also consider convicting DeLee of manslaughter as a hate crime, as well as murder or manslaughter without the hate crime element.

Green, who was born Moses Cannon but began living as a woman at age 16, frequently dressed in women’s clothing but was wearing jeans and a T-shirt the night she was killed.

During three days of testimony, DeLee’s attorney, Clarence Johnson, denied prosecution claims that his client hated homosexuals. Johnson contended prosecutors presented no evidence showing DeLee had a history of anti-gay bias before the shooting.

But several witnesses said they heard DeLee refer to Green as a “faggot” just before Green was shot with a .22-caliber rifle while sitting in a parked car outside the party. But Johnson noted that other witnesses attributed the slur to others at the party. □



Hotel employees evacuate guests at outside the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Jakarta after bombs tore through the hotel and the nearby JW Marriott. Canada condemned Friday's bombings at two hotels in Jakarta that killed at least nine people and injured dozens including two Canadians.

(AFP)

SUICIDE BOMBERS

Continued from Page B1

At least eight Americans were

among those injured in the two blasts.

Indonesia was last hit by terrorists in October 2005, when three suicide bombers with explosives-laden backpacks killed 20 people at restaurants on the resort island of Bali. The Jakarta Marriott was targeted six years ago in a car bombing that left 12 people dead. Both attacks were blamed on the Southeast Asian terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah.

Friday's attackers evaded hotel security and smuggled explosives into the Marriott by posing as guests and assembling the bombs in room 1808, where an undetonated device was later found by police.

"They had been using the room as their 'command post' since July 15, and today they were

supposed to check out," police chief Gen. Bambang Hendarso Danuri said. At the Marriott, such a "deluxe" room, with marble-decorated bathrooms and plush furnishings, goes for about \$200 a night.

Security video footage captured the moment of the explosion. The brief, grainy images show a man in a cap pulling a bag on wheels across the Marriott lobby toward the restaurant, followed by a flash and a blast of white smoke.

"There was a big explosion followed by a shock wave," said Ahmad Rochadi, a security guard at the Marriott who was checking cars in the basement. "I rushed upstairs and saw smoke billowing from the lobby."

Alex Asmasubrata, who was jogging nearby, said he walked into the Marriott before emergency services arrived and "there were bodies on the ground, one of them had no stomach. It was terrible."

The blast occurred as the Marriott was hosting a regular business meeting organized by the consultancy firm CastleAsia, said the group, which is headed by an American.

An Australian think tank, the Strategic Policy Institute, had warned that Jemaah Islamiyah might launch new attacks just a day before Friday's deadly strike.

International luxury hotels have become a common target for extremists in recent years, with at least eight bombings at major chains since 2003.

In Indonesia, security is tight at five-star hotels, where guests must typically walk

through metal detectors and vehicles are inspected. But many visitors say searches are often cursory.

Defense analyst Paul Beaver, former top editor at Jane's Defense Weekly, said putting in place the kind of stringent security measures needed to help prevent attacks is difficult for hotels — and risks making properties that are supposed to be welcoming to weary travelers feel like prisons.

"You don't want to embarrass your guests with security measures," he said, noting that plotters in dozens of countries can also alter tactics based on experience gained from prior attacks. "This is the risk we take. There are a number of attacks like these waiting to happen."

In Indonesia, he said, the culprits seemed to have learned from hotel attacks in the Indian financial capital of Mumbai in November, when a three-day siege of the Taj Mahal hotel, the Oberoi's Trident hotel and eight other sites left 164 dead.

Authorities did not immediately name a suspect, but suspicion fell on Jemaah Islamiyah or its allies. The al-Qaida-linked network is blamed for past attacks in Indonesia, including the 2003 bombing at the Marriott in which 12 people died. Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who is widely credited with leading a crackdown on extremism, said the attack was carried out by a "terrorist group" and vowed to arrest the perpetrators.

The Manchester United football team canceled a visit

to Indonesia in the wake of the attacks. The team had been scheduled to stay at the Ritz-Carlton on Saturday and Sunday.

President Barack Obama condemned the "outrageous attacks" and said the U.S. government stands ready to help its ally in the effort to combat extremism.

"We will continue to partner with Indonesia to eliminate the threat from these violent extremists, and we will be unwavering in supporting a future of security and opportunity for the Indonesian people," said Obama, who lived in Indonesia as a child.

The Marriott was hit first at 7:45 a.m. (0045 GMT, 8:45 p.m. EDT Thursday) followed two minutes later by the blast at the Ritz-Carlton. Both explosions were at the lower levels of high-rise buildings in the prestigious Mega Kuningan neighborhood.

Anti-terrorist forces with automatic weapons rushed to the site, and authorities blocked access to the hotels in a district also home to foreign embassies.

The security minister and police said a New Zealander was among those killed, and that 17 other foreigners were among the wounded, including the eight Americans and citizens of Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, India, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, South Korea and Britain.

The dead New Zealander was identified by his employer as Timothy David Mackay, 61, who worked for cement products manufacturer PT Holcim Indonesia. □



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R	PUBLIC ENEMIES	daily: 5:45 matinee: 12:05	8:45 late show: 11:30	
PG-13	TRANSFORMER 2	daily: 6:00 matinee: 12:00	9:00 late show: 11:50	
R	THE TAKING OF PELHAM 123	daily: 7:10 matinee: 9:30	late show: 11:45	
PG-13	YEAR ONE	daily: 5:00 matinee: 12:40	7:10 late show: 9:15	
PG-13	TERMINATOR SALVATION	daily: 8:15 matinee: 11:00		
PG	ICE AGE 3 DAWN OF THE DINOSAURS	daily: 4:15 matinee: 12:20	6:15 late show: 8:30	3D
PG	IMAGINE THAT	daily: 4:55 matinee: 12:10	2:30 late show: 5:00	

AT PASEO HERENCIA

R	THE HANGOVER	daily: 5:35 matinee: 1:15	7:45 late show: 9:50	NEW
R	PUBLIC ENEMIES	daily: 5:45 matinee: 12:05	8:45 late show: 11:35	
PG-13	THE PROPOSAL	daily: 4:30 matinee: 12:10	6:45 late show: 9:00	
PG-13	LAND OF THE LOST	daily: 10:00 matinee: 12:05		
R	THE TAKING OF PELHAM 123	daily: 7:40 matinee: 10:00	late show: 12:10	
PG	ICE AGE 3 DAWN OF THE DINOSAURS	daily: 4:00 matinee: 12:00	6:00 late show: 8:00	3D
PG-13	TRANSFORMER 2	daily: 5:40 matinee: 12:05	8:30 late show: 11:25	
PG-13	THE SOLOIST	daily: 5:15 matinee: 12:20	2:45 late show: 5:00	

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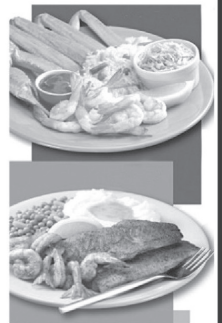
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Alleged US missiles kill 5 in northwest Pakistan



Firemen try to extinguish fire caused after an alleged attack by militants on oil tankers for NATO forces, in Khyber near Peshawar, Pakistan on Friday, July 17, 2009. A government official said militants launched two attacks on oil tankers in northwest Pakistan carrying fuel supplies to NATO forces in neighboring Afghanistan. One bystander has been killed.

By RASOOL DAWAR and
MUNIR AHMAD,

Associated Press Writer

MIR ALI, Pakistan — A suspected U.S. missile strike in a Pakistani tribal region killed at least five alleged militants Friday, officials said, showing America's unwillingness to abandon the tactic even as Pakistani officials say it could interfere with army offensives in the northwest.

Also Friday, Pakistan's top court overturned opposition leader Nawaz Sharif's conviction on hijacking charges stemming from the 1999 coup against his government, clearing the last obstacle to his running for office.

The missile strike hit a house in Gariwam village in North Waziristan, said two intelligence officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to media on the record.

Local government official Anayat Ullah also confirmed a missile hit the village, while resident Ahmad Raza said he heard Taliban in the area saying five of their comrades were dead.

Over the past year, the U.S. has launched dozens of missiles strikes in Pakistan's northwest regions bordering Afghanistan. The North and South Waziristan sections of the country's semiautonomous tribal belt have been frequent targets because of the heavy Taliban and al-Qaida presence there.

U.S. officials rarely acknowledge or comment

(AP Photo/Qazi Tariq)

on the individual strikes, but some have defended the tactic, saying it has killed several top al-Qaida fighters. The U.S. is keen on ridding Pakistan of safe havens for militants involved in attacks

on American and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Though many analysts suspect the two countries have a secret deal allowing the drone-fired missiles, Pakistan formally protests the assaults, saying they violate its sovereignty and stir anger among tribes in the affected areas.

The army has said keeping the Waziristan tribes happy is key right now in particular, because it needs their help, or neutrality, as it prepares to launch a full-scale offensive aimed at capturing or killing Baitullah Mehsud, Pakistan's Taliban chief.

South Waziristan is his base, and U.S. missiles have hit targets associated with him. Pakistan's political stability has also been a source of concern to the U.S., with Sharif's status a constant source of tension

between him and the ruling party of Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari.

In its decision Friday, the Supreme Court said there was no evidence to support Sharif's past conviction.

Sharif spokesman Sadiqul Farooq said it brought a close to the final criminal case against the two-time prime minister, paving the way for his return to public office. According to recent polls, Sharif is the country's most popular politician.

"We knew that Nawaz Sharif is innocent, but today's court order also proved that he had been wrongly convicted," Farooq said.

Pakistan's army ousted Sharif's government in a bloodless coup on Oct. 12, 1999, the day Sharif removed Pervez Musharraf from his

post as army chief and refused to allow the general's plane to land at a Karachi airport while returning from a foreign trip.

After assuming power, Musharraf's military government charged Sharif with ordering the hijacking of Musharraf's plane. Sharif argued his actions only aimed to avert a coup that was already under way.

Friday's ruling was the third in the past two months to lift a ban on Sharif's participating in elections. Sharif has made no secret of his desire to return to public office but has said he does not want early elections. Political analyst Hasan-Askari Rizvi said Friday's court ruling could lead to better ties between Sharif and Zardari and "will contribute to the stabilization of the political scene." □

Police tear-gas Iran protesters during prayer

By ALI AKBAR DAREINI,

Associated Press Writer

TEHRAN, Iran — Tens of thousands of government opponents packed Iran's main Islamic prayer service Friday, chanting "freedom, freedom" and other slogans as their top clerical backer Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani delivered a sermon bluntly criticizing the country's leadership over the crackdown on election protests.

Outside, police and pro-government Basiji militiamen fired tear gas and charges thousands of protesters who chanted "death to the dictator" and called on President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to resign. Dozens were arrested, piled in trucks and taken away, witnesses said.

Plainclothes Basijis stood in front of a line of riot police and pumped canisters of tear gas, which young protesters with green bandanas over their faces kicked away across the pavement, away from the crowds. Some set a bonfire in the street and waved their hands in the air in victory signs.

The opposition aimed to turn the Friday prayers at Tehran University into a show of their continued strength despite heavy government suppression since the disputed June 12 presidential election.

Opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi, who claims to have won the election, sat in the front row of worshippers, attending for the first time since the turmoil began. Many of the tens of thousands at the prayers wore headbands or wristbands in his campaign color green, or had green prayer rugs.

In his sermon broadcast live on radio nationwide, Rafsanjani reprimanded the clerical leadership for not listening to people's complaints over the election, which was declared a victory for Ahmadinejad despite opposition claims of fraud.

"Doubt has been created (about the election results)," Rafsanjani said. "There is a large portion of the wise people who say they have doubts. We need to take action to remove this doubt."

Rafsanjani couched his sermon in calls for unity in support of Iran's Islamic Republic. But his sermon was an unmistakable challenge to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who declared Ahmadinejad's victory valid and ordered an end to questioning of the results. Rafsanjani said the dispute has split clerics and warned of "crisis."



This photo, taken by an individual not employed by the Associated Press and obtained by the AP outside Iran, shows two opposition demonstrators flashing victory sign during a protest in Tehran, Iran, Friday, July 17, 2009.

(AP Photo)

Worshippers interrupted Rafsanjani with chants of "azadi, azadi" — Persian for "freedom" — and the cleric got tears in his eyes as he spoke of how Islam's Prophet Muhammad "respected the rights" of his people. Rafsanjani said the leader of the 1979 Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, "knew that people's vote was the most important thing in our country" and insisted it be enshrined in the founding of the Islamic Republic.

"Where people are not present or their vote is not considered, that government is not Islamic," Rafsanjani said.

He criticized the postelection wave of arrests, saying the leadership should show sympathy for protesters and release those detained. "Sympathy must be offered to those who suffered from the events... and reconcile them with the ruling system," he said. "We need to placate them."

Rafsanjani, a former president, regularly gives the Friday sermon but had not appeared since the election turmoil began. He is bitter rival of Ahmadinejad and is considered Mousavi's top supporter within Iran's clerical leadership, heading two of the three main clerical bodies that oversee the government. □

Pope falls and fractures wrist



Pope Benedict XVI waves from his car as he leaves the Regional Hospital in Aosta, Italy, Friday, July 17, 2009, after surgery on his right wrist. The pope broke his right wrist during a late-night fall in his Alpine vacation chalet and will have to have his arm in a cast for a month while recovering from surgery, doctors said Friday.

(AP Photo/Luca Bruno)

By LUCA BRUNO and ARIEL DAVID, Associated Press Writers
AOSTA, Italy – Pope Benedict XVI emerged smiling from the hospital Friday after undergoing surgery for a broken wrist due to a fall at his Alpine vacation chalet. Doctors said his right arm would be in a cast for a month. A Vatican statement said the 82-year-old pope fell in his room overnight and despite the

accident celebrated Mass and had breakfast in the morning before going to the hospital. After an X-ray showed the fracture, surgeons performed a successful, 20-minute operation under local anesthesia on the right wrist, said Dr. Pierluigi Berti, the director of the Umberto Parini hospital in Aosta. The surgery was to reduce the fracture, a procedure to realign the broken bone fragments. The German-born pontiff left

the hospital about six hours after arriving, smiling and waving with his left arm as he climbed into his car. His right arm hung straight by his side, the cast hidden by his white vestments. At one point he pointed to the cast, as if to explain why he wasn't waving with his right hand.

Berti said the pope was in high spirits and stressed that the fall had been accidental and was not the result of any health condition. He said the cast will be removed in a month. Dr. Amedeo Mancini, the orthopedic surgeon who performed Friday's operation, said the pope would suffer no long-term effects from the fracture and would be able to write and play the piano once his wrist heals.

"It was a special patient for a routine operation," Mancini said, adding that Benedict was an excellent patient and readily agreed to the surgery. Dr. Patrizio Polisca, the pope's personal physician who was at the hospital with him, said in a statement that Benedict's general health was good and he was fit to return to the chalet in the mountains near Aosta. Despite his age and a history of serious medical problems, Benedict has been remarkably healthy during his four-year pontificate, keeping to a busy schedule and traveling around the world.

In fact, until Friday's surgery, there have been no reported medical problems since he assumed the papacy in 2005.

The most serious issue in his medical record was a hemorrhagic stroke he acknowledged suffering in 1991 that temporarily affected his vision, as well as a fall that knocked him unconscious in 1992. Benedict has said he recovered without permanent damage from either incident. Vatican spokesman the Rev. Federico Lombardi said earlier Friday that Benedict had slipped in his room at the chalet and was hurt, but that it did not seem serious. The ANSA news agency reported that Benedict arrived at the hospital by car and walked into the first aid ward with his personal secretary, Monsignor Georg Ganswein. □



People pray at the burial of slain rights activist Natalya Estemirova at a cemetery in Koshkeldy, 70 km (44 miles) east of Grozny, Chechnya, Thursday, July 16, 2009. Weeping mourners escorted the body of Natalya Estemirova through Chechnya's capital on Thursday, honoring the activist whose brazen kidnapping and execution-style killing shocked Russia's beleaguered human rights community and prompted international outrage.

(AP Photo/Musa Sadulayev)

Slain activist faced pressure from Chechen leader

By MUSA SADULAYEV and STEVE GUTTERMAN, Associated Press Writers

GROZNY, Russia – Natalya Estemirova's last meeting with Chechnya's strongman president did not go well: She faced Ramzan Kadyrov and his lieutenants alone, summoned for a chilling dressing down in which he boasted of having "blood from my hands to my elbows."

The March 2008 confrontation was not the human rights activist's first brush with the bullnecked boxing enthusiast. But looking back, some of her colleagues say, it may have been a grim forewarning of her violent end.

On Wednesday, the 50-year-old single mother and onetime schoolteacher was kidnapped, driven past numerous police checkpoints, shot in the head and dumped by a roadside. It was an attack eerily similar to many of the slayings she investigated in her war-ravaged Russian province.

Rights activists have laid Estemirova's death at the doorstep of the Kremlin-backed Kadyrov, whose security forces they accuse of the abduction, torture and murder of suspected insurgents and their relatives. They said Kadyrov's rule had created a climate of lawlessness and impunity that made her killing possible.

"I know who is guilty of Natalya's murder," Oleg Orlov, head of Moscow-based Memorial, told a press conference Thursday. "His name is Ramzan Kadyrov."

After two vicious wars between Russian forces and separatists, marked by human rights abuses on both sides, Kadyrov, 32, claims to have brought law and order to Chechnya.

But Estemirova's reports painted a far darker picture. Orlov said Estemirova's detailed investigations described Chechnya as a lawless province where "it's possible to abduct people every day, kill them, put them in secret prisons" without little or no risk of punishment.

The result was not surprising: "Ramzan Kadyrov hated Natasha," he said. The Chechen president, rights advocates say, wasn't just worried about the image of his homeland. He saw Estemirova as a personal challenge to his authority and prestige.

Activists said Kadyrov was outraged when Estemirova, in televised remarks in March 2008, criticized his order for women and girls to wear headscarves in schools, universities and government offices — a requirement that clashed both with Russian law and, many Chechens say, Chechen traditions.

The Chechen leader "yelled at her, asked questions about who she lived with, where her relatives were and how old her daughter was," said Tatyana Lokshina, a researcher with the Human Rights Watch who specializes in Chechnya and the surrounding region. □



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Mediator to propose reconciliation gvt in Honduras



Protesters calling for the return of ousted President Manuel Zelaya blocked key roads around the Honduran capital, intensifying a three-week leadership crisis in this Central American state.

By JUAN ZAMORANO,
Associated Press Writer
TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras – The mediator in Honduras’ political crisis said he will propose a national reconciliation government during the next round of talks, while ousted President Manuel Zelaya prepared a second bid to return home to reclaim power. Negotiations to end the standoff over a June 28 military-backed coup have increasingly come under fire, with Zelaya’s supporters saying they will declare them failed if he is not reinstated during Saturday’s

(AFP/Orlando Sierra)
talks and Cuba’s Fidel Castro and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez criticizing them as a U.S.-backed trap. Zelaya’s foreign minister, Patricia Rodas, said late Thursday that the exiled president was en route to Honduras to set up an alternative seat of government somewhere in the country from which to wage a “final battle” against coup leaders. Interim President Roberto Micheletti has vowed to arrest Zelaya if he returns. Zelaya himself, speaking from Nicaragua, told Venezuelan state television late Thursday

that the weekend talks hold out a moment of hope for a solution, but said he was keeping up preparations for a return.

“I am preparing various alternatives: by air, by land, and others,” he said.

In Honduras, scores of his supporters, meanwhile, gathered to block the main highway connecting Tegucigalpa to the Caribbean coast Friday.

With fears of conflict rising, the chief mediator, Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, acknowledged the urgency of getting a deal quickly, saying that “we must remember that time is gold.”

“I am going to propose various ideas (at the talks); for example installing a government of national reconciliation, a coalition of key ministers such as of finance, security, the interior or government. I’ll see if we can talk of amnesties and for whom,” Arias said in an interview with the radio program, Nuestra Voz.

Arias, who won the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize for helping end Central America’s civil wars, said a proposal to advance Honduras’ elections

from the scheduled November date was not considered necessary.

Delegations representing Zelaya and Micheletti are expected to join the second round of talks Saturday in Costa Rica under Arias’ guidance, but hopes for a resolution appear slim.

When he was last seen in public, Zelaya vowed to return if Saturday’s talks don’t immediately result in his reinstatement and he said Hondurans have a constitutional right to launch an insurrection against an illegitimate government.

Rodas reinforced that, saying Zelaya’s delegation has nothing to negotiate.

It will simply demand that

the “illegal regime surrender peacefully,” and if it doesn’t, Zelaya’s side will declare the mediation to have failed, she said.

Micheletti, the former congressional leader who was sworn in to serve out the final months of Zelaya’s term, offered Wednesday to step down if there were guarantees that Zelaya would not return to power.

Arias rejected that proposal, saying the reinstatement of Zelaya was necessary.

But Micheletti on Thursday repeated his refusal to consider Zelaya regaining the presidency.

“If he comes and presents himself to authorities, he is welcome in our country. □



In this photo released by Ancestry.com on Thursday, July 16, 2009, Susan Samuel walks through Frederiksted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, tracing the roots of her ancestor Venus Johannes, on July 12, 2009. Captured as girl in west Africa, Venus Johannes was married off to an American sea captain and sold into slavery on the Caribbean island of St. Croix. Two centuries and six generations later, researchers compiling a collection of slave records from the island traced her birthline to Susan Samuel, a 62-year-old woman in Houston.

(AP Photo/Ancestry.com)

Castro blames Bush appointees for Honduran coup

By WILL WEISSERT,
Associated Press Writer

HAVANA – Fidel Castro blames the coup in Honduras on the U.S. Embassy in that Central American country and other American diplomats in the region appointed during the administration of George W. Bush.

“Unscrupulous characters of the extreme right who were trustworthy officials of George W. Bush” toppled the democratically elected government of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, Castro claimed late Thursday.

In a column posted on a government Web site, the 82-year-old former Cuban president stopped short of blaming Barack Obama for Zelaya’s ouster. He suggested the U.S. State Department conspired with the leaders who took power after the coup to broker a false diplomatic solution while Obama was distracted by travels in Russia.

“The idea that the ambassador of the United States in Tegucigalpa, Hugo Llorens, knew nothing about or discouraged the coup is absolutely false,” Castro wrote, referring to America’s top diplomat in the Honduran capital. “He knew about it, as did American military advisers who have not ceased training Honduran troops even for one second.”

The day before the coup, Zelaya publicly

praised American officials in Honduras for working to preserve his presidency, and Obama has joined the United Nations, the Organization of American States and other governments in condemning the coup.

The U.S. Embassy in Honduras severed all contact with the new government and suspended more than \$18 million in military assistance and development aid programs, though Washington has not joined other nations in recalling their ambassadors to Honduras.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has met with Zelaya personally and promoted the idea of brokering a peace agreement through mediations with Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, a Nobel peace laureate. But Castro contends that “the Costa Rica peace plan was suggested by the office of the State Department to contribute to the consolidation of the military coup.”

He said the interim government has grown more entrenched and international support for Zelaya has waned.

“The coup plotters were in a hurry. The Costa Rican initiative had the objective of saving them,” he wrote. “It’s obvious that Yankee handiwork does not increase the possibilities for peace but does exactly the opposite.” □

Virgin Islands researchers unveil slavery records

By MIKE MELIA,
Associated Press Writer Mike

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – A collection of slavery records newly available over the Internet may help thousands of people trace their families back to Africa through St. Croix, a former slave-trading hub in the Caribbean.

The records, which went online Thursday at ancestry.com, already have helped Susan Samuel of Houston discover the story of an ancestor who was freed after persuading officials that she had been illegally sold into slavery.

“Even though she came from a very horrible situation, she decided not to be defined by it,” Samuel said of her great-great-great-grandmother Venus Johannes, who was captured as a 12-year-old girl in what is now Senegal in West Africa.

More than 50,000 enslaved Africans were taken to St. Croix during the island’s Danish colonial rule, said George Tyson, who led a seven-year effort to gather documents from archives in the Virgin Islands, Washington and Copenhagen. □

SPORTS

Aruba TODAY



Tiger Woods misses cut at British Open



TURNBERRY- With a cold and murky sea gurgling behind him, Tiger Woods bent at the waist in search of his missing golf ball. He swiped at the tall heather on Turnberry's 10th hole like anyone else would in a disquieting round of golf, moving the yellow blades of grass around in a fruitless pursuit.

Several groups ahead, the 59-year-old Tom Watson was carrying a British Open gallery in the palms of his weathered hands, beating back a rash of bogeys and rolling in putts from distance.

These were two sights few predicted they would ever see at the 138th British Open at Turnberry. The world's No. 1-ranked golfer doubled over, careening toward his second missed cut in a major since turning professional. And Watson, the world's 1,374th-ranked golfer, leading the British Open after all these years. At blustery Turnberry, the 33-year-old Woods is going home, removed from the storyline of golf's oldest

major championship after missing the cut for the first time since the 2006 United States Open at Winged Foot. After opening his championship with a one-over 71 in calm conditions on Thursday, Woods followed in Friday's windy weather with an unsightly four-over 74.

His five-over 145 through 36 holes left him one shot on the wrong side of the cut line. He will have to wait until next month's PGA Championship at Hazeltine to resume his chase of a 15th major title, and he is still four short of his boyhood idol, Jack Nicklaus, who won 18.

"It was just problem after problem," Woods said of his play after his round. "I kept compounding my problems out there."

Left in Woods's wake is a fascinating leader board, topped by a five-time British Open winner in Watson and a first-time British Open participant in Steve Marino. They stand at five-under 135, one man widely considered the greatest links

golfer ever born, the other man playing links golf for the first time.

Mark Calcavecchia, the 1989 British Open champ, stands one shot back, and several other big names, including Vijay Singh, Retief Goosen and Miguel Angel Jimenez, are two back.

That the biggest name in golf, Woods, is leaving Turnberry early is one of the biggest surprises of the golf season.

Entering the championship, Woods appeared to be in form. Two weeks ago he won the AT&T National, the tournament he hosts outside of Washington D.C. The British betting houses had listed him at 2-to-1 odds, a nod to his three previous British Open titles and his abundant skill.

More than one prognosticator this week said it would be surprising if anyone other than Woods won. Instead, he frittered away shots on Turnberry's Ailsa Course, most notably on the par-4 10th, where he drove into the right



rough, couldn't find his ball despite a five-minute search (that included help from the gallery) and made double bogey.

Woods added a bogey at No. 12 and a double bogey at 13 after he mis-hit a short pitch and a short chip. That left him at seven over par. The cut was four over. He needed three birdies.

The first came at 16, where Woods rolled in a curling putt from 20 feet. The second came at 17, where he got up and down from the behind the green on the par 5, rolling in a 3-footer. Woods is nothing if not a fighter. He made his way to the par-4 18th tee and launched an iron that settled into the light rough to the right. From 199 yards, he hoisted an 8-iron

to the back fringe beyond the green. He would have to hole a chip shot from 50 feet to be assured a place on the weekend.

He paced the length of the shot, seeming to study every blade of grass on the green. He settled over the ball, struck it and watched it roll. The line was perfect. The speed looked good.

Then, the ball stopped, a full two feet short.

Golf's leading man was done for the day, felled by Turnberry's teeth and his own mistakes, and booted from the British Open.

"You can't make mistakes and expect to not only make the cut but also try and win a championship," Woods said. "You have to play clean rounds of golf, and I didn't." □

MLB nixes Yanks' signing of player with fraudulent identity



NEWYORK-Atop New York Yankees prospect is not who he claims to be, sources tell SI.com. Two weeks ago, the Yankees signed a shortstop purporting to be 16-year-old Damian Arredondo from the Dominican Republic to an \$850,000 bonus. Now Major League Baseball's Department of Investigations has determined that Arredondo is not the player's real name and that he is older than 16. The Yankees signed the player they thought was Arredondo on July 2, the first day that major league teams are permitted to sign international free agents as

young as 16. The Yankees were impressed with the switch-hitter's strong arm and speed -- he reportedly ran a 60-yard-dash in 6.4 seconds.

According to a new Major League Baseball rule, a player found to have used a fraudulent identity or to have misrepresented his age cannot sign with another club for one year. Major League Baseball has recently increased its efforts to deter identity fraud in Latin America by hiring new investigators and dispatching other investigators from its New York City office to

oversee the process.

In general, sources say that MLB will be working with authorities in the Dominican Republic to bring criminal charges against the orchestrators of fraud -- often the trainers and agents who stand to make large percentages of the prospects' signing bonuses.

Mark Newman, the Yankees Senior Vice President of Baseball Operations, says that he has not received official notification of the outcome of the Arredondo investigation. The Yankees

did not lose any money on the prospect because his bonus was contingent on the outcome of the investigation. Newman expressed gratitude that the investigative process was swift, allowing the team time to continue searching for prospects among the pool of free agents who have not yet been signed.

The Yankees also signed Dominican catcher Gary Sanchez on July 2 for \$3 million. According to his agent, Brian Mejia, Sanchez has already passed multiple investigations. □

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Lance Armstrong lashes out at French sports minister



COLMAR- Lance Armstrong is fed up with criticism of his Astana team by the French sports minister.

Roselyne Bachelot said Astana riders at the Tour de France remained out of sight of an International Cycling Union inspector too long during a random doping test last week.

"Enough is enough," Armstrong said Friday. "This is ridiculous. We've been controlled more than anybody else on the race. We have had this team for a long time. We've never had a positive control. Yes, we are successful. Yes, we are the strongest team in the race. But enough of the (outcry) in the media."

According to French sports daily L'Equipe, a UCI official drank coffee with officials from Astana in Andorra last Saturday and didn't test the riders for nearly an hour.

"There was a little bit of avoidance going on," Bachelot said Thursday. "I hope it won't happen again."

Armstrong, who says he has been tested more than 30 times since he came back

to competition this season, accused Bachelot of being "slightly political."

"Those are political statements, and they help to get attention -- and perhaps it reinforces their commitment to the fight against doping," Armstrong said. "But again, the facts are the facts."

"We are controlled more than anybody else. We are never positive. Our biological passports -- compared to anybody else -- the quote-unquote 'clean teams,' I will put them side by side every day of the week."

Before the race started on July 4 in Monaco, Bachelot had warned Armstrong that he would be "particularly monitored" for doping during the Tour.

The 37-year old Texan said he was always available for doping controls.

"When they knock at my door, I go down and give the blood," Armstrong said. "It's not as if I'm looking at my window and I see them coming and I stay in my room. I think there are people who think that but ... That's not the way it works now. That's not the way it

has ever worked.

"It's also the Tour de France. You can't wake up guys on a day of a mountain stage at 6 a.m.," Armstrong said. "There is also a human aspect there."

According to Armstrong, the doping controllers arrived too early at the Astana hotel last Saturday before the second stage in the Pyrenees.

Following his last Tour victory, Armstrong railed against the "cynics and the skeptics" who didn't believe his triumphs were doping-free. A month after his retirement, L'Equipe reported that Armstrong's "B" samples from the 1999 Tour contained EPO -- a banned blood-boosting hormone. The newspaper is owned by race organizer ASO.

Armstrong insisted he was the victim of a "witch hunt," and a Dutch lawyer appointed by the UCI later cleared him.

"The key thing is -- we all have to remember -- yes we want the controls. Yes we want a clean event," Armstrong said before Friday's 13th stage.

After the incident in Andorra,

French anti-doping chief Pierre Bordry accused the UCI of "laxity."

UCI president Pat McQuaid was surprised by Bordry's comments and denied allegations that the UCI "is making any difference with

the riders." Last year, the AFLD ran doping controls alone. The UCI is back to oversee testing this year, but in collaboration with the AFLD, which can target riders and ask the UCI to test them. □

Red Sox to designate Julio Lugo and release



BOSTON- Julio Lugo's tenure in Boston is over.

The Red Sox designated the shortstop for assignment on Friday, a move that will lead to his release.

The Red Sox will have 10 days to trade Lugo once the roster move is official. If they are unable to deal him, Lugo will be released.

The move comes a day after one source told FOXSports.com that the Red Sox were "desperately" trying to trade Lugo. Another source said the team recognized Lugo as a "sunk cost" and was not expecting much in return for him.

Lugo, 33, is owed the remainder of his \$9 million salary this season, plus \$9 million next season. He will be available to any team for minimum salary if released, and the Red Sox would be on the hook for rest that is owed to him, which comes to approximately \$13 million. Boston is also offering to do that in a trade.

Manager Terry Francona told WEEI Radio in Boston that third baseman Mike Lowell is expected back from his hip strain on Friday or Saturday, while shortstop Jed Lowrie is set to return from wrist surgery on Saturday. The Red Sox also need to clear a roster spot for right-hander Clay Buchholz, who is scheduled to make his first start of 2009 on Friday night.

The Sox can demote first baseman Aaron Bates to clear a spot for Buchholz, then demote Buchholz to clear a spot for Lowell or Lowrie. But under virtually every scenario, Lugo had to go.

Lugo, who won a World Series with Boston as a starter in 2007, is batting .284 with a .352 on-base percentage in 123 plate appearances, but the Sox are 11-16 when he starts at shortstop, compared to 42-15 with Nick Green. A number of clubs want to acquire a young shortstop. But few teams, if any, are looking for an expensive veteran. □



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Dwayne Wade leaving Converse, going to Nike Jordan Brand

MIAMI- NBA scoring champion Dwyane Wade(notes) is changing shoes, making the switch from Converse to Nike's Jordan Brand.

Nike announced Friday that the star Miami Heat guard will now represent the Jumpman label, joining Chris Paul(notes), Carmelo Anthony(notes), Derek Jeter and others.

Wade had three years left on his deal with Converse, which made him the centerpiece of its attempt to reinvigorate a once-thriving basketball business. That relationship seemed rocky when the 2006 NBA finals MVP wore his most recently released signature shoe, the "Wade 4," only once last season and favoring an older model instead.

But Wade said the partnership ends on good terms.

"When I came into the NBA, I didn't have a lot of exposure and Converse gave me an opportunity to head a brand and be the face of a brand," Wade told The Associated Press. "I'm really thankful for six long, good years. I've gotten five shoes out of the deal and my dream came true at the Converse brand, because they put my name on a pair of sneakers."

Still, the lure of the Jordan brand—a 12-year-old division of Nike, which also owns Converse—was too much for Wade to ignore.

Wade told The AP he inquired about switching allegiances from Converse to Jordan's brand before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, doing so in part about concern over Converse's long-term viability in the basketball marketplace.

The 2008 request was declined, but earlier this month, Wade said he was "almost

positive" a switch would happen sometime before the season. Less than two weeks later, the deal was done.

"It did come sort of fast. It wasn't anything we planned," Wade said. "But it's a good thing. Now we can plan for the season." Coming off a year where the Heat went from 15 to 43 wins and Wade won his first scoring title, Nike apparently agreed that the switch now made sense.

"I'm thrilled to have Dwyane Wade join the Team Jordan family," Michael Jordan said in a statement.

The deal was finalized Thursday. Terms were not released, although it's believed the new deal, at minimum, matches the remaining three years on the Converse contract. It's a significant add to Wade's endorsement resume, which already includes deals with T-Mobile and Gatorade.

"I want to go global," said Wade, who is planning a business trip to China later this summer. "It's something I feel like I have to do. I want to continue to build my brand."

Wade made a cryptic reference to the move on his Twitter feed late Thursday night, saying he had "good news coming.....stay tuned." Dozens of people quickly starting pleading for more information, even Wimbledon finalist Andy Roddick, who inquired via Twitter if that was Wade's way of saying he had agreed to a contract extension with the Heat.

"Not only did Andy Roddick hit me on Tweet, he hit me on my phone immediately, right after that," Wade said. "That's when I knew I sparked a little interest."

Wade offered another Tweet on Friday: "I'm finally home with brand Jordan," he wrote. □

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Fujimori afirma dio 15 mln dlr para evitar golpe Perú

LIMA (Reuters) - El ex presidente peruano Alberto Fujimori dijo el viernes que dio 15 millones de dólares a su ex mano derecha Vladimiro Montesinos para evitar un golpe de Estado, que el propio ex jefe de inteligencia preparaba en su contra en el 2000 en medio de un escándalo de corrupción.

En una cerrada defensa política al final de un nuevo juicio público, Fujimori dijo también que es inocente del cargo de peculado y adelantó que igual espera una sentencia en su contra de parte de quienes buscan aniquilar el proyecto de su partido político, de cara a las elecciones generales del 2011.

El ex presidente, que cumplirá 71 años a fines de julio, es acusado de entregar una millonaria indemnización a su ex asesor Montesinos en septiembre del 2000, poco después de estallar un escándalo de corrupción del país.

Los fiscales piden para Fujimori ocho años de cárcel en el juicio cuya sentencia será leída el lunes. En abril, la justicia lo condenó a 25 años de cárcel acusado de avalar la matanza de 25 personas durante su Gobierno.

“Tuvimos que recurrir a medidas extremas para garantizar la estabilidad y la transferencia del poder, pero con la entrega transitoria de esos 15 millones se logró que el ex asesor de inteligencia saliera del país”, afirmó el ex mandatario.

Fujimori aceptó en el juicio la entrega del millonario

monto a Montesinos, actualmente preso en una base naval, pero rechazó que cometió el delito de peculado porque sostiene que restituyó después el dinero al Tesoro Público.

En efecto, el dinero quedó registrado en el erario pero se desconoce de dónde salieron esos fondos, según la fiscalía, que afirma que su devolución no exime el delito de peculado.

Tras la entrega del dinero, Montesinos huyó a Panamá y regresó por breves días, en octubre del 2000, para fugarse otra vez de Perú, hasta que fue capturado en Venezuela en el 2001.

TEMORES POLITICOS

El ex mandatario afirmó que el dinero que restituyó al Tesoro lo recuperó después de una “intensa búsqueda” en las instalaciones de la sede del servicio de la inteligencia en Lima, cuando trataba de detener a Montesinos.

“Sé que no encontraré la justicia dentro de estas cuatro paredes”, afirmó Fujimori al final del proceso.

“Como político entiendo que con esta sentencia lo que se pretende es no tener a Fujimori libre porque cambiaría totalmente la escena política del país, no sólo la electoral del año del 2011, sino del escenario actual en el que el fujimorismo ha cobrado un enorme peso específico”, dijo el ex mandatario en

un discurso leído como alegato final.

El mandatario, cuya salud se resquebrajó durante el primer juicio que duró 16 meses, está recluido en una base policial desde septiembre del 2007, cuando fue extraditado desde Chile acusado de abusos a los derechos humanos en Perú.

“El veredicto lo ha empezado a dar miles de peruanos que sí tienen memoria de lo que fue el terrorismo, la hiperinflación, el caos y la incertidumbre, por eso hoy apoyan de manera masiva y contundente a mi hija Keiko”, dijo Fujimori.

Según la última encuesta de la firma Ipsos Apoyo en junio, la legisladora Keiko Fujimori figura como líder en las intenciones de voto para la presidencia en el 2011.

Keiko Fujimori tiene el 22 por ciento de las preferencias electorales. En el segundo lugar de las intenciones de voto se ubicaron el actual alcalde de Lima, Luis Castañeda, y el nacionalista Humala, ambos con un 15 por ciento. □



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